

ASK Magazine

By practitioners for practitioners

Issue 7

FROM THE DIRECTOR'S DESK



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Sounds like Team Spirit

by Dr. Edward Hoffman

I recently accompanied my son Dan to one of his guitar lessons. As I sat in a separate room, I focused on the music he was playing and the beautiful, robust sound that comes from a well-played guitar. Later that night, I woke up around 3 am. I tend to have my best thoughts at this hour. The trouble is I usually roll over and fall back asleep. This time I was still awake an hour later, so I got up and jotted some notes down in my study.

I was thinking about the pure, honest sound of a well-played instrument. From there my mind wandered into the realm of high-performance teams and successful projects. (I know this sounds weird, but this is the sort of thing I think about at 3 am. Maybe you have your own weird thoughts around that time.)

Consider a team in relation to music. It seems to me that a crack team can achieve a beautiful, perfect unity in the same way that a band of brilliant musicians can when they're in harmony with one another. With more than a little satisfaction I have to admit, I started to think about the great work performed for you by the Knowledge Sharing team, including this magazine you are reading.

Over the past two years I personally have received some of my greatest pleasures as the APPL Director from the Knowledge Sharing activities - the Masters Forums, NASA Center visits, ASK Magazine. The Knowledge Sharing team expresses such passion for their work, just like great musicians convey their passion in the music they play. In the case of Knowledge Sharing, there are many factors that have made this so enjoyable (and hopefully worthwhile for NASA).

Three ingredients come to mind -- ingredients that have produced a signature sound.

First, through the crazy, passionate playing of Alex Laufer, Michelle Collins, Denise Lee, and Todd Post, I always know that something startling and original is going to come out of their activities. This team has consistently done things that are unique and innovative. For me, best of all is that they are always trying to improve on what they've done before.

Second, success in any endeavor stems from people who know how to interpret a composition to sound beautiful when played in a different style. For Knowledge Sharing to work, it must be adapted, reinterpreted, shaped and played with at the centers. In this regard, we've been blessed with another crazy, passionate, inspired artist named Claire Smith. Claire has turned Ames Research Center in California

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Sounds like Team Spirit (cont'd)

into APPL-west. She is so good and committed to what she does that I just refer people to her whenever they have questions about implementing project management development at the field level.

Finally, any great effort requires talented people working behind the scenes, the people who formulate a business approach and know how to manage the money so that the music gets heard. I have known many brilliant and creative people with a ton of ideas that never take off due to an inability to work the business. Again, the Knowledge Sharing team has been fortunate to have competent and passionate people, specifically Tony Maturo and his procurement team at Goddard Space Flight Center, to make sure the process is in place to support the effort. This kind of support is every bit as crucial as the activity itself, and the efforts and creativity that go into successful procurement and contracting is a vital ingredient of this successful team.

When I consider the Knowledge Sharing effort, I hear the sound of great music. You can't tell me there isn't a connection between inspired musicianship and the accomplishments of a great team. Not when I've heard it with my own ears.